

**Background:** This lesson focuses on what memorials themselves tell us about the people and events commemorated on them. It can be used as a template for examining any war memorial in Kent but War Memorials Trust's war memorial case studies can be used as examples in the lesson if you do not have access to a memorial locally. Other useful examples and links to them are suggested in the lesson plan. Pupils are encouraged to consider memorials as sources of historical information and pose and answer historical questions using them. There is the opportunity to visit a local war memorial if this has not been done previously, and you may need to allow some extra time for this. This lesson is particularly helpful as an introduction to activities like researching names on war memorials, and suggestions for how to continue the lesson are given in the 'Ideas for further work' section.

**Suitable for:** Key Stage 2

**Learning objectives:** Pupils will learn:

- That war memorials can be used to find out about the past
- What information may be given on a war memorial, and that this varies

**Resources:** 'Teachers' information about war memorials' and 'Planning a visit to a war memorial' primary helpsheets, case studies of Kent war memorials available from [www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org](http://www.learnaboutwarmemorials.org), photos of your local memorial if using this as a focus

## Introduction

### What are war memorials?

- Review what war memorials are and their continuing importance to communities, especially as we approach the centenary of the First World War. If the general lesson plans from War Memorials Trust have been used, then a brief recap of the relevant points of these should be sufficient. Otherwise, discuss the main points on our 'Teachers' information on war memorials' primary helpsheet to ensure pupils have a good overview of key information about war memorials.
- Ask pupils to write down questions about the wars that the memorials you are looking at commemorate (likely to be the First and Second World Wars) and the people who were involved in those wars.

### Information that can be seen on war memorials

- Give different groups photos of your local war memorial, or photos of one of the Kent war memorials for which War Memorials Trust provides a case study, and give pupils five minutes to look at their pictures and write down what they can see and the information they can get from the memorial. Encourage them to look at the actual written information but also beyond this at the design and what this tells us. The written case studies of these memorials provide details about some of their interesting details and you may find these helpful to refer to.
- Other Kent memorials that include interesting information and could be included here are Knowlton ([www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/161152](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/161152)), a Thankful Village that was also named as the 'Bravest Village' during the First World War—its inscriptions give interesting details about this; and the 'Channel Dash' memorial in Ramsgate ([www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/127017](http://www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk/node/127017)) which commemorates Operation Fuller and gives considerable detail about many aspects of the events and people remembered.
- They should also write down any answers to their questions that they are able to work out through this activity.

## Suggested teaching points and activities

### What does the war memorial tell us?

- Discuss what information can be found on the memorials, with different groups giving information about 'their' memorial. This will vary according to which memorials you are using, but information may include who it commemorates, when the wars commemorated happened, who erected the memorial, some of the places fought in and where they are, and the community's attitude towards those who died.
- Discuss which of their questions they have been able to answer using the information they see on the memorial. Which ones couldn't they answer?
- Through doing this pupils should come to understand that all war memorials are different and have different information on them. Depending on their prior knowledge, you may wish to expand on why this is—war memorials have historically been community creations and as such reflect the individual wishes of the community and how they wanted to commemorate their fallen. There have never been (and still aren't) any rules about war memorials and so each one is unique.
- Highlight how, for example, some memorials give only the names of those commemorated while others give other information such as their rank or age. Other memorials give detailed information about the events commemorated whereas others only give the dates of the conflict.
- Pupils should also come to the conclusion that war memorial designs and inscriptions can often reveal important information, but that in order to fully understand wars and know about the people they affected (and answer all their questions) we need to look at other sources of information alongside the war memorial.

### Conclusion

- Discuss what these other sources of information might be (local records, census records, military information and more recent internet sources, for example) and why it is important to find out about war memorials and the people and events they commemorate—highlight the fact that the First and Second World Wars are, or soon will be, beyond living memory and objects like war memorials link us to past events.

### Support/Extension:

The activities in this plan are suggestions only, and teachers will need to adapt the lesson to take account of the needs of their class.

- More able pupils could be challenged to look at war memorials where the information they contain is less 'obvious' e.g. where they have to look at the design and interpret what symbols or certain design elements represent.

### Ideas for further work:

There are various opportunities to extend this lesson and link it with other areas of the curriculum:

- As mentioned above, the activities in this lesson provide a useful introduction to activities such as researching the names on one of the memorials used or your local one. This is covered in War Memorials Trust's general lesson plans, which can be applied to war memorials in any area. Researching names on a war memorial or looking at the history of the local area with the war memorial as a starting point incorporates various curriculum areas including history, geography and ICT.

For further information and resources please contact the Learning Officer at:  
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